

Review of: "Testosterone and the “Honor Culture” of Young Black Men"

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This paper shows an interesting finding, which is higher testosterone levels in non-educated young black men as compared to non-black non-educated young men. However, my main concern with this publication is that it claims that the main results are explained by an honor culture, when no empirical support is presented for this association.

Whereas the results of higher testosterone levels in non-educated young black men seem relatively solid (see Methodology), the link with 'honor culture' is rather weak. The literature references that are used to introduce the concept of honor culture do not support that this may be accentuated in the non-educated black community as compared to other non-educated groups.

The author also neglects the controversy around the criminality reports in USA, affected by racial biases in the law enforcement and judicial systems to more frequently arrest and sentence racial minorities and low-income individuals (who also lack the means to access better legal resources).

It is expected that non-educated young men from other groups (white and hispanic) are also involved in groups that emphasize the need and importance of 'honor and respect' (i.e. street gangs). In parallel, educated individuals from all sociocultural groups may use other means to claim honor and respect in a hierarchical system (e.g. through expensive accessories or other power symbols).

Testosterone may increase in situations when the individual's status feels threatened or challenged, which can happen as a result of a wide range of circumstances. As mentioned before, the result of higher levels of testosterone in low-educated black men -as compared to non-black analogous groups- seems solid. In addition, young black women also showed higher levels of testosterone. Other possible factors could partly be related to the lack of opportunities as a member of a group that is continuously threatened and discriminated. Whereas there is no evidence to support this argument, different possible explanatory factors should be discussed.

Another point is that the immersion in 'honor cultures' frequently starts during early adolescence, the findings from this publication are observed at a later age.

An interesting finding which was unfortunately not discussed was the lower levels of testosterone in educated men as compared to non-educated men. This finding could potentially mean that men with education are able to reach a stable social status and/or are immerse in hierarchical systems with clear boundaries.

Methodology:

- It is not clear whether there was some overlap of individuals between the surveys of 2013-2014 and the sample of 2015-2016 (or with the one from 2011-2012).
- The author mentions that he used relationship status as a control variable but he reports using an ANOVA, targeting a three-way (or two-way) interaction, this could be further clarified. This is very important as actually using the relationship status as a CV could completely change the results.
- The redefinition of high school graduates from the “low” education category to the “high” category is discussable, as it can be argued that now -even more than ten years ago when the 2011-2012 survey was used- the threshold for education demands in the job market and social status has increased (i.e. a higher education is needed to get a better job and higher social status).
- In Table 1, the Age appears to be accounted by years (was this grouped as shown in the graph?) and the Education has five levels. It is not clear whether this classification is comparable to the previous study and also is not agreement with the graph. It may be understood that the graph was simplified for visualization purposes but this could be specified.

The main strength of this publication in the large sample size and the replication of previous findings.